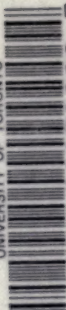
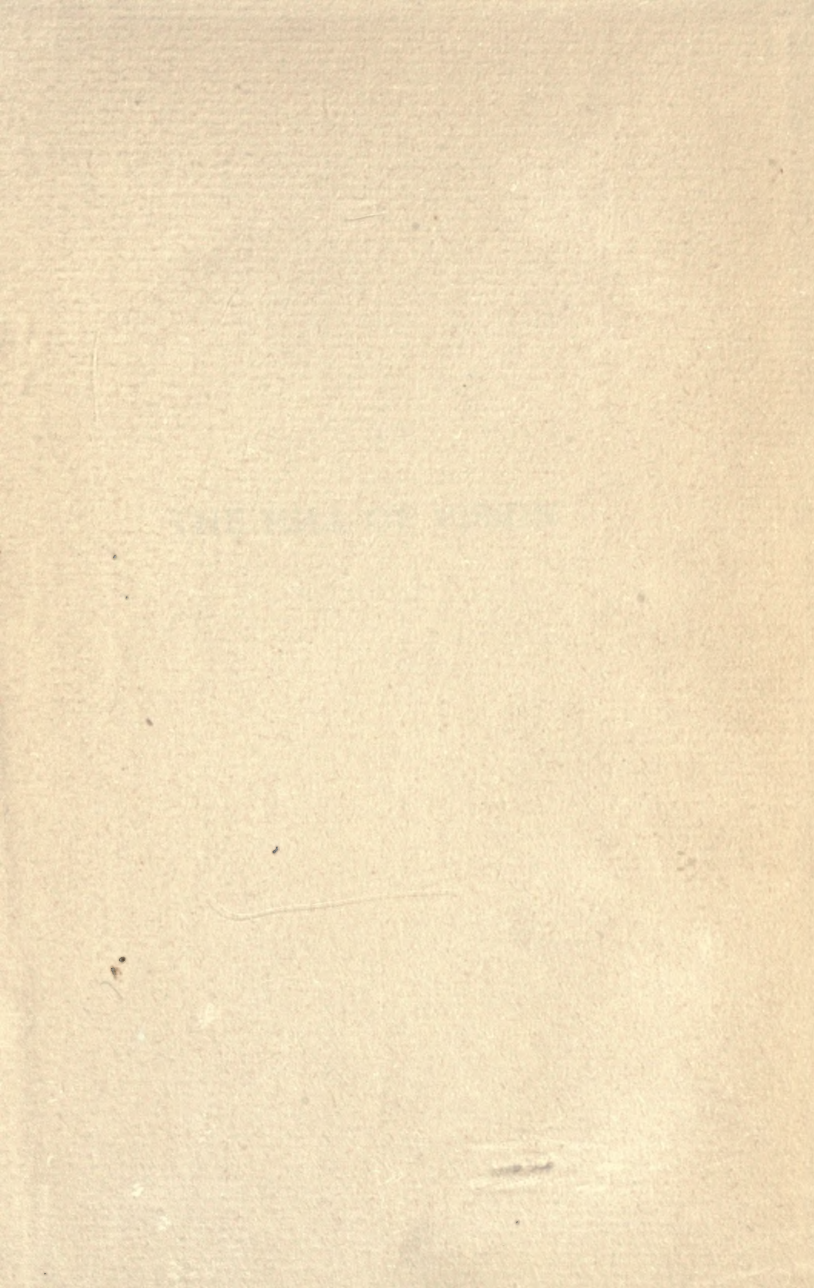


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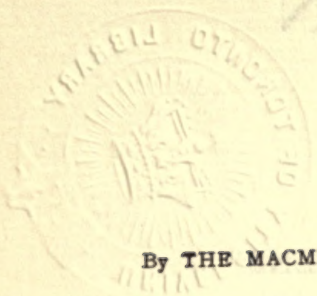
JAMES STEPHENS

AUTHOR OF "INSURRECTIONS"

Second Edition

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VISION

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To
My Wife

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Everything that I can spy
Through the circle of my eye,
Everything that I can see
Has been woven out of me;
I have sown the stars, and threw
Clouds of morning and of eve
Up into the vacant blue;
Everything that I perceive,
Sun and sea and mountain high,
All are moulded by my eye:
Closing it, what shall I find?
—Darkness, and a little wind.

A PRELUDE AND A SONG

THE PRELUDE

*Song! glad indeed I am that we have met,
Too long, my sister, you have stayed from
me;*

*Almost I fancied that you could forget
Those binding promises, that you would be
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Waiting for me.*

*I came and looked about on every side
But where you hid away I could not see;
And first I searched among the meadows
wide,
And up the hill, and under every tree,
And down the stream to see if you were
there
Waiting for me.*

*But when I did not find you in the mead,
Or by the stream, or under any tree,
I thought you had forgotten we agreed,
Not long ago, that you would surely be
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Waiting for me.*

*You came to me I do not know from where:
I stood and saw you not, I turn and see:
Have you sprung to me from the sunny air?
Or in the long grass did you curiously
Watch while I wandered, laughing as you
lay
Waiting for me.*

*And you have brought your pipe! let us be-
gin,
Against your skill I match my poetry:
A kiss if I should fail, and if I win
A kiss the same—tune not your melody
Too high at first, I shall not keep you long
Waiting for me.*

O little wind that through the forest ways

At evening and at morning still does go,
Or from the hilltop with a lordlier praise
Shouts without ceasing to the meads below!
From cave or lake or wood
Come, little wind and share our solitude;
Leave those sad vagaries that make us
 weep,
Your long-blown pealing trumpet put away,
And where a merry holiday we keep
Here in the sunny fields come dance and
 leap
And sing aloud with us the live-long day.

For we have often seen you in the corn
Nodding the poppy heads in dainty play,
Or through the meadows on a summer morn
Blowing the little thistle balls away:
And one day, unobserved, we watched you
 where
You stole a ribbon from a maiden slim
And threw it to a boy who stood and
 prayed,
Which, e'er he kissed, you snatched away
 from him

And blew it back again unto the maid
Who was his only hope and thought and
care;

And while he sighed and while she laughed
you took

The ribbon up and soused it in a brook,
Beyond the reach of lover anywhere.

And yet again we saw

You playing with the milkmaids in the
shaw,

Where standing near a satyr trained his eye
If haply there was anything to see

And crept up to you with a mind to spy

The cause of such exceeding jollity:

Then, when the satyr looked too curiously
You blew his own rough beard and shaggy
hair,

And blinded him who stared so greedily,

Because it was not right that he should see
The milkmaid's kirtle that you meddled
there.

So you can laugh and play;

Come then and join our merry holiday:

Join in our song and maybe you will win
Because you are so free from thought or
care,

Nor ever question, does the sinner sin?
Or, who has seen? or, why or when or
where?

No longer bide
By wood or hill or green or river's side,
But your quaint careless lute bring with you
here

And sing to us and we will sing to you,
Until we find who has the finest ear,
And who the sweetest voice and gayest
cheer,
And to him give the praise that is his due.

O nymphs! if ye will come from spring or
lake,

Or where the sedge is wavering in the
stream,

To dance with us and with us to partake
A careless fellowship, or with us dream
Stretched idly on the grass to watch the
gleam

Of sunlight through the leaves—we welcome true

And will applaud your shy romantic theme,
Your delicate wild tales and music new;
And fair respectful courtesy extend to you.

Round the trees ye danced and flew
While the boughs danced down to see,
And the sun was dancing through
Leafy spaces on the tree:
The daisies danced, the meadow-sweet,
All the swaying grassy blades
Danced behind the dancing feet
Of the merry dancing maids.

But ye goat-footed fellows keep away,
Nor through the bushes strain your wily
eyes,
For ye would love to spoil our holiday,
And fright the nymphs away with sudden
cries,
And whispers lewd and vicious enterprise:
But if ye promise truly to be good,
Then come with your thin reeds and im-
proviser

Your antic dances practised in the wood,
And all the games you play in sunlit soli-
tude.

Left and right and swing around,
Soar and dip and fall for glee,
Happy sky and bird and ground,
Happy wind and happy tree:
Happy minions, dancing mad,
Joy is guide enough for you,
Cure the world of good and bad,
And teach us innocence anew.

In sunlit solitude wherein ye keep
A merriment we never understood,
Whose only privilege is when we weep—
Away the word! but come ye happy brood
Of nymphs and dancing satyrs who have
wooed

So often and so often, come and lie
Beside us on the grass, and be as good
As your wild natures let, while singing high
We send our joyful choruses up to the sky.

Good and bad and right and wrong,
Wave the silly words away:

This is wisdom to be strong,
This is virtue to be gay:
Let us sing and dance until
We shall know the final art,
How to banish good and ill
With the laughter of the heart.

Now sister, blow your pipe with curvéd
lips,
And all ye others come and sit around
And hearken to my measure as it trips
Now high, now low, with a melodious
sound:
My best I sing, and if it seem to you
That ye have heard my measures sung
before
In old poetic days, give me my due,
For those who sang so well were very few
Tho' dead, and none alive can soar
Up to the simple rapture of my lays:
But be ye silent till my time is o'er,
Then if ye like my songs give me my praise.

THE SONG

I have a black, black mind!
What shall I do?
If I could fly and leave it all behind,
Scaling the blue,
Over the trees and up and out of sight,
And wrong and right
Naming them both the nonsense that they
are!
I'd leave them far,
Drop them behind with these and these and
these,
The tyrannies
That promised to be blessings and are woes,
The chattering crows
That I had fancied to be singing birds,
The angry words
That drowse and buzz and drone and never
stay.
Oh! far away!

Over the pine trees and the mountain top,
Never to stop;
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly
Into the sky.

If I had wings just like a bird
I would not say a single word,
I'd spread my wings and fly away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

If I could swim just like a fish
I'd give my little tail a swish,
I'd swim ten days and nights and then
I never would be found again.

Or if I were a comet bright
I'd drop in secret every night
Ten million miles, and no one would
Know where I kept my solitude.

But I am not a bird or fish
Or comet, so I need not wish,
And need not try to get away
Beyond the reach of yesterday.

Damn Yesterday! and this and that,
And these and those, and all the flat
Dull catalogue of weighty things
That somehow fastened to my wings.

Over the pine trees and the mountain top!
I will not stop,
I lift my wings and fly and fly and fly
Into the sky.

No more of woeful Misery I sing!
Let her go moping down the paved way;
While to the sunny fields, and everything
That laughs, and to the little birds that
sing,

I pass along and tune my happy lay:
O sunny sky!
O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-
ing by!

I walk and play beside the little stream
As by a friend: I dance in solitude
Among the trees, or lie and gaze and
dream

Along the grass, or hearken to the theme
A lark discourses to her tender brood:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are
drifting by!

There is a thrush lives snugly in a wall,
She lets me come and peep into her nest,
She lets me see and touch the speckled ball
Under her wing, and does not fear at all,
Although her shy companion is distressed:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-
ing by!

Sing, sing again ye little birds of joy!
Call out from tree to tree and tell your tale
Of happiness that knoweth no alloy;
Altho' your mates seem timorous and coy
If ye sing high enough how can ye fail?

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-
ing by!

On every side, as far as I can see,

The round horizon—like a bosom's swell,
Seems brooding in a sweet maternity
Where no thing may be hurt, not even me,
But she will stoop and kiss and make us
well:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-
ing by!

I am the brother of each bird and tree
And everything that grows—your children
glad;

Their hearts are in my heart, their ecstasy!

O Mother of all mothers, comfort me,

Give me your breast for I am very sad:

O sunny sky!

O meadows that the happy clouds are drift-
ing by!

I wandered far away in early morn,
When summer did the happy trees adorn;
Leaving behind all woe and discontent,
All sorrow and distress and angry pain,
And did not say to any where I went,
Or when, or if I would return again
From leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and far away,
And was as happy as a person may,
Until I heard the birds all singing plain
Upon their several trees, a joyous band,
Who had no care save only to attain
The food and shelter that lay every hand
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and did not turn:
At their glad songs my heart began to
burn,
And joy that I had never known before,
And tears that had no meaning I could say,
Came from the hymns the little birds did
pour
To me as I went softly on my way
In leafy solitude.

I wandered far away and I was glad:
I knew the rapture that the forest had:
And every bird was good to me and said
A kindly word before I passed him by,
The cheery squirrel sat and ate his bread
And did not fear me when I ventured nigh
His leafy solitude.

I wandered far away—O, all alas!
How quickly does the little freedom pass!
Can I return again to domicile?
Or leave the birds each on his several tree?
Or wonder did I weep and did I smile?
Or recollect the songs they sang to me
In leafy solitude?

O birds, my brothers, sing to me once
more!
E'er I return again to whence I came,
Give me your happiness, your joy, your
lore,
Your woodland innocence I claim
Because ye truly are my brothers dear:
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

In woodland paths again we may not meet;
Under the slender interlacing boughs,
Where all day long the sunbeams flash
and fleet
On leaf and grass and wing,
And all day long ye sing
And hold carouse:

Because ye truly are my brothers dear
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

I from your happy company must go away
To whence I came;
But ye through all the quiet summer day
Will sing the same,
And fly and hold carouse
Under the slender interlacing boughs
When I am gone, who am your brother
dear:
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

All things must cease at last;
Night cometh after day
And day is past:
All things must end
And friend from loving friend
At the long last must rise and go away;
And from the slender interlacing boughs
The leaves that flutter now will fail and
fall;

The time is come I may no more carouse,
Farewell to ye, farewell unto ye all
Ye birds who truly are my brothers dear:
Sing to me once again before I go from
here.

O clouds that sail afar, almost unseen!
O unattainable! to you alone
I lift my wings,
To you I lean,
I yearn to you beyond all other things;
Desperate I am for you, for you I moan;
I struggle up to you and always fail,
I sink and fall, I fall for ever down,
Deep down where you are not, without
avail
Or help or hope: a clod, a grinning clown
Whose wry mouth laughs in fury at his
thought;
A discontent without a word to say;
A hope that cannot fasten upon aught;
A nothing that is anything it may;
A moodiness, a hatred and a love

Mixed, mixed of good and bad that can
not show;

But you are calm at morning as a dove
Is calm upon her nest, and in the glow
Of midday you are bathed round with joy,
And as a woman looking on the child
Within her arms asleep has no annoy
So, with contented brows and bosom mild,
You rest upon the evening and its gold,
Its tender rose and pearl and green and
gray:

O peacefulness that never has been told!
O far away!

Over the pine trees and the mountain top,
Never to stop
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly
Into the sky.

Weary indeed I know the whole world is;
Then do not sing to me a song of woe,
But tune your pipe to every merry bliss
Ye can remember, and I will not miss
To join in every chorus that I know:
Give me the very rapture of your song

Else I may go away with thoughts that do
ye wrong.

The joyful song that welcomes in the
spring,

The tender mating song so bravely shy,
The song that builds the nest, the merry
ring

When the long wait is ended and ye bring
The young birds out and teach them how
to fly:

Sing to me of the beechnuts on the ground,
And of the first wild flight at early dawn,
And of the store of berries some one found
And hid away until ye gathered round
And ate them while he shrieked upon the
lawn:

Sing of the swinging nest upon the tree,
And of your mates who call and hide away,
And of the sun that shines exceedingly,
And of the leaves that dance, and all the
glee

And rapture that begins at break of day.

O birds, O birds, sing once again to me!

Sing me the joy ye have not reached to yet;
E'er I go hence give me your ecstasy,
E'er I go hence, e'er far away I flee
Give me the joy which I may not forget:
The very inner rapture of your song:
Else I may go away with thoughts that do
ye wrong.

O follow, follow, follow!
Blackbird, thrush and swallow;
The air is soft, the sun is shining through
The dancing boughs;
A little while me company along
And I will go with you:
Arouse, arouse!
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Blackbird, thrush and swallow!
Indeed the visits that I pay are very few,
Then come to me as I have come to you:
O follow, follow, follow!
Leave for a little time your nested boughs
And me accompany along,
Join me while I am happy; rouse, O rouse!
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Sky, sky,
On high,
O gentle majesty!
Come all ye happy birds and follow, follow
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Blackbird, thrush and swallow!
No longer in the sunlight sit and drowse
But me accompany along;
No longer be ye mute; arouse, arouse!
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song.

Lift, lift, ye happy birds,
Lift song and wing,
And sing and fly,
And fly again and sing
Up to the very blueness of the sky
Your happy words.
O follow, follow, follow,
Where I go racing through the shady ways,
Blackbird, thrush and swallow,
Shouting aloud our ecstasy of praise:
Under the slender interlacing boughs
Me company along,
The sun is coming with us: rouse, O rouse!
Among the leaves I sing my pleasant song,

Reach up my wings!

Now broaden into space and carry me

Beyond where any lark that sings

Can get:

Into the utmost sharp tenuity,

The breathing-point, the start, the scarcely-
stirred

High slenderness where never any bird

Has winged to yet!

The moon peace and the star peace and
the peace

Of chilly sunlight: to the void of space,

The emptiness, the giant curve, the great

Wide-stretching arms wherein the gods em-
brace

And stars are born and suns: where ger-
minate

All fruitful seed, where life and death are
one,

Where all things that are not their times
await;

Where all things that have been again are
gone:

Deep Womb of Promise! back to thee
again

And forth, revived, all living things
Do come and go,
Forever wax and wane into and from thy
garden;
There the flower springs,
Therein does grow
The bud of hope, the miracle to come
For whose dear advent we are striving
dumb
And joyless: Garden of Delight
That God has sowed!
In thee the flower of flowers,
The apple of our tree,
The banner of our towers,
The recompense for every misery,
The angel-man, the purity, the light
Whom we are working to has his abode:
Until out back and forth, our life and
death
And life again, our going and return
Prepare the way: until our latest breath,
Deep-drawn and agonized, for him shall
burn
A path: for him prepare

Laughter and love and singing everywhere;
A morning and a sunrise and a day!
O, far away!
Over the pine trees and the mountain top
Never to stop
Lifting wide wings, to fly and fly and fly
Into the sky.

*Song! I am tired to death! here let me lie
Where we have paced the moving trees
along,
Till I recover from my ecstasy:
Farewell my Song.*

*Once more unto your pipe I lend my
rhyme
Who in the woods did pace with you along;
We have been happy for a little time:
Farewell my Song.*

*Soon, soon return or else my world is
naught;
Come back and we will pace the woods
along,*

*And tell unto each other all our thought:
Farewell my Song.*

*And when again you do come back to me
Under the sounding trees we'll pace along,
While to your pipe I raise my poetry:
Farewell my Song.*

IN THE POPPY FIELD

Mad Patsy said, he said to me,
That every morning he could see
An angel walking on the sky;
Across the sunny skies of morn
He threw great handfuls far and nigh
Of poppy seed among the corn;
And then, he said, the angels run
To see the poppies in the sun.

A poppy is a devil weed,
I said to him—he disagreed:
He said the devil had no hand
In spreading flowers tall and fair
Through corn and rye and meadow land,
By gurth and barrow everywhere:
The devil has not any flower,
But only money in his power.

And then he stretched out in the sun
And rolled upon his back for fun:

He kicked his legs and roared for joy
Because the sun was shining down,
He said he was a little boy
And would not work for any clown:
He ran and laughed behind a bee,
And danced for very ecstasy.

THE FULNESS OF TIME

On a rusty iron throne
Past the furthest star of space
I saw Satan sit alone,
Old and haggard was his face;
For his work was done and he
Rested in eternity.

And to him from out the sun
Came his father and his friend
Saying, now the work is done
Enmity is at an end:
And he guided Satan to
Paradises that he knew.

Gabriel without a frown,
Uriel without a spear,
Raphael came singing down
Welcoming their ancient peer,
And they seated him beside
One who had been crucified.

LIGHT-O'-LOVE

But now, said she, I must away,
And if I tend another fire
In some man's house this you will say—
It is not that her love doth tire:
This is the price she has to pay,
For bread she gets no other way,
Still fainting for her heart's desire.

And so she went out from the door
While I sat quiet in my chair:
She ran back once, again—no more;
I heard a footstep on the stair,
A lifted latch; one moment fleet
I heard the noises of the street,
Then silence booming everywhere.

NUCLEOLUS

I looked from Mount Derision at
Two ivory thrones that were in space,
Whereon a man and woman sat,
The very parallels of grace,
Not lovelier had ever been
By mortal seen.

Then one unto the other said,
Tell me the secret hidden well
Which you have never uttered,
And I to you again will tell
My guarded thought, and we will know
Each other so.

Then he—When those who pray beside
My holy altars do not bear
A gift to me I turn aside
And do not listen to the prayer,
But whoso brings a gift will see
The proof of me.

And she—When on a festal day
The youths kneel down before my shrine
I think, if he or he might lay
His ruddy cheek to mine
And comfort my sick soul I'd lay
My crown away.

THE BRUTE

Still she said No and No,
And begged me loose her hand:
I let it go,
But gripped her dress instead:
I could not stand
For swimming of my head.

And then a sudden weakness came upon me
And my trembling knees
Went shaking to the ground.
Ah misery!
She would not listen,
Stared at me and frowned.

I begged, implored . . .
All the love I'd stored
Came gasping in a net
Of tangled pleading,
Sigh and pant and fret,
And words disjointed,
Bitten through and bleeding.

But she went No and No and No again,
And No for ever,
Spite of all endeavour;
Until like wintry rain
That pattering word whirled on my mad-
dened head
And froze me furious while she thought
me dead.

But then with icy lips I cursed her there,
Eyes, nose and teeth and hair;
I damned her body, bones and blood—and
then
She scuttled homewards like a frightened
hen.

MOUNT DERISION

Deep within the spacious round
I saw a man and woman bound,
Middle to middle and knee to knee,
With a rusty iron chain,
Which when one or the other would flee
Drew them close together again :
This was on the Hill of Vision
Which the gods call Mount Derision.

There lay upon the ground a key
Which the couple did not see
Tho' with fury they were bowed;
And they struggled in the sun,
And each to the other shouted loud
An urgent business to be done
If the fruitful strife might cease
And they work together in peace.

Thought and Feeling, Brain and Heart,
These, which cannot work apart,

Were loving sister and kindly brother
Long ago till desire and strife
Chained the twain unto each other
As hated husband and hateful wife,
Who must suffer till they see
Love is crowned by liberty.

THE SOOTHERER

O Little Joy, why do you run so fast?
Waving behind you as you go away
Your tiny hand. You smiled at me and
cast

A silver apple, asking me to play:
But when I ran to pick the apple up
You ran the other way.

Bad one! I will refuse to eat my food,
I will not talk or laugh or say a prayer
Unless you cease from running; I will brood
In secret if you leave me: I declare
I'll drink and fight and go to the bad
And curse and swear!

Little One! White One! Shy Little Gay
Sprite!

Do not turn your head across you shoulder
To laugh and mock at me; it is not right
To laugh at me for I am older:

Throw me the silver apple once again
You little scolder.

I love you very dear, indeed I do;
I never saw a girl like you before
In any place. You are more sweetly new
Than a May moon: you are my store,
My secret and my treasure and the pulse
Of my heart's core.

Throw me the silver apple—I will run
And pick it up and give it you again:
Dear Heart! Sweet Laughter!—throw it
 then for fun
And not for me—if you will but remain,
 . . . Nay do not run; I'll stand thus
 far away
And not complain.

Come just a little nearer, half a pace,
One little, little step: my eyes are bad,
They cannot altogether see your face
At this great distance—if I had
Good sight I would not mind how far I
 stood,
I would be glad.

Never before—or only one or two:
I did not really like them half so well,
Not really half so well as I like you,
Throw me the silver apple and I'll tell
Their names, and what I used to say to
 them,
—The first was Nell.

Throw me the apple and I'll tell you more;
—She had a pretty face, but she was fat:
We clung together when the rain would
 pour
Under a tree or hedge, and often sat
Through long, still, sunny hours—Tell
 what she said?
I'll not do that.

I really couldn't, no, it would be wrong
And most unfair, I will not say a word
About the girl—(your voice is like the song
I heard this morning from a little bird)
 . . . I'll whisper then if you come close
 to me,
—You've hardly stirred.

She said she loved me better than her life.
—You need not laugh, she said so anyway,

And meant it too, and longed to be my
wife:

She kissed me many times and wept to stay
Within my arms and did not ever want
To go away.

But she was fat, I will admit that's true:
And so I hid when she came seeking me.
If she had been as beautiful as you . . .
(You are as slender as a growing tree,
And when you move the blood goes leaping
through
The heart of me).

The other girl? Yes, she is very fair:
Her feet are lighter than the clouds on
high,
And there is morn and noonday in her
hair,
And mellow, sunny evenings in her eye,
And all day long she sings just like a lark
Up in the sky.

I say she did—she loved me very well,
And I loved her until, Ah, woe is me!
Until today, when passing through the dell
I met yourself, and now I cannot see
Her face at all, or any face but yours
In memory.

I ought to be ashamed? well amn't I?
But that's no comfort when I'm in a trap:
I tell you I shall sit down here and die
Unless you stay—you do not care a rap—
Ah, Little Sweetheart, do not run away,
. . . Have pity on a chap.

You'll go—then listen, you are just a pig,
A little wrinkled pig out of a sty;
Your legs are crooked and your nose is big,
You've got no calves, you have a silly eye,
I don't know why I stopped to talk to you,
I hope you'll die.

Now cry, go on, mew like a little cat,
And rub your eyes and stamp and tear your
wig;
I see your ankles! listen, they are fat

And so's your head, you're angled like a
twig,
Your back's all baggy and your clothes
don't fit
And your feet are big!

She's gone, begor, she legged it like a hare!
You'd think I had the itch, or else a face
Like a blue monkey—keeps me standing
there,
Not good enough to touch her . . . !
Back I'll race
And make it up with Breed, that's what
I'll do,
. . . *There is a flower that bloometh,*
Tra la la la laddy la . . .

THE SPALPEEN

Looking on the rounded sky
From the Hill of Vision, I
Saw him striding here and there
Sowing seeds upon the air,
And he told the name of these,
Days and Years and Centuries.

Then a seed to me he threw
Saying, 'tis a gift for you,
The best of all the seeds that be
This is the seed of mystery,
And its name is Death but no
Other tree can blossom so.

It will top the clouds and run
Branches up into the sun:
Fruit and leaf and branch and stem
Will grow far too high for them,
The Immortals, who will cry
We are tired and cannot die.

"Fear of the Gods" will be its name,
It will cover up their fame;
And beneath its shade will go
Mighty mortals to and fro
Who will die and live and be
Eager through eternity.

DANNY MURPHY

He was as old as old could be,
His little eye could scarcely see
His mouth was sunken in between,
His nose and chin, and he was lean
And twisted up and withered quite,
So that he could not walk aright.

His pipe was always going out,
And then he'd have to search about
In all his pockets, and he'd mow
—O, deary me! and, musha now!
And then he'd light his pipe, and then
He'd let it go clean out again.

He could not dance or jump or run,
Or ever have a bit of fun
Like me and Susan, when we shout
And jump and throw ourselves about:
But when he laughed then you could see
He was as young as young could be.

THE TREE OF THE BIRD

I sat beneath a tree in a wide park,
There was a lark, a bard of ecstasy,
Who sang among the leaves of his beloved:
—"Thou art most fair, O, my beloved,"
 said he,
"None can with thee compare,
Thy flight is with the stars and with the
 wind,
And thou art kind,
O, my most well-beloved"
—Such was his minstrelsy.

The mellow evening sun trod to a hill
Far off and blue,
But I was too enraptured with the skill
Of that young songster, and the still
Slow rustling of the boughs
To heed how far the sun had stepped
Unto his western house,
Whereto

At evening he must turn again his brightness to renew.

There came to me a languor sad,
The sacred peace which Adam had
When in the morning after he
Had been expelled to misery
He wakened with his bride,
And cried his thanks and praise to God
For trees and dew and birds that flew,
For sun and breeze and cloudy sails
Which he aforetime knew and loved in
Eden's vales.

He did a moment furthermore
Outpour his many-patterned song,
Down to the ground and up to the sky,
About, around, an ecstasy,
A sheer and sweet swift rush along;
It failed and ceased, and then he threw
His pinions wide,
Away he flew,
Because he could no longer bide
Away from her he glorified.

A little wind from out of space
Breathed softly on my face,
The gray and peaceful evening stole
Around the tree, till branch and bole
Were lost, and there remained to me
Nothing at all to hear or see
But this—
A bliss, a happiness,
A song that came like a caress,
A memory, no more—which you,
My friend, are very welcome to.

PEADAR ÓG GOES COURTING

Now I am nicely dressed I'll go
Down to where the roses blow,
I'll pluck a fair and fragrant one
And make my mother pin it on:
Now she's laughing, so am I—
O the blueness of the sky!

Down the street, turn to the right,
Round the corner out of sight,
Pass the church and out of town—
Dust does show on boots of brown,
I'd better brush them while I can;
Step out, Peadar, be a man!

Here's a field and there's a stile,
Shall I jump it? wait a while,
Scale it gently, stretch my foot
Across the mud in that big rut

And I'm still clean—faith, I'm not!
Get some grass and rub the spot.

Dodge those nettles, here the stream
Bubbles onward with a gleam
Steely white, and black, and gray,
Bending rushes on its way—
What's that moving? It's a rat
Washing his whiskers, isn't he fat?

Here the cow with the crumpleddy horn
Whisks her tail and looks forlorn,
She wants a milkmaid bad I guess
How her udders swell and press
Against her legs—and here's some sheep,
And there's the shepherd fast asleep.

This is a sad and lonely field,
Thistles are all that it can yield,
I'll cross it quick, nor look behind,
There's nothing in it but the wind:
And if those bandy-legged trees
Could only talk they'd curse or sneeze.

A sour, unhappy, sloppy place—
That boot's loose! I'll tie the lace
So, and jump this little ditch,
. . . *Her father's really very rich:*
He'll be angry—there's a crow,
Solemn blackhead! off you go.

There a big gray, ancient ass
Is snoozing quiet in the grass,
He hears me coming, starts to rise,
And wags his big ears at the flies.
. . . *What'll I say when*—there's a
frog,
Go it, long-legs, jig, jig-jog.

He'll be angry, say—"Pooh, pooh,
Boy, you know not what you do."
Shakespeare rot and good advice,
Fat old duffer—those field mice
Have a good time playing round
Through the corn and underground.

But her mother is friends with mine,
She always asks us out to dine,

*And dear Nora, curly head,
Loves me; so at least she said.*

. . . Damn that ass's hee-hee-haw—
Was that a rabbit's tail I saw?

*This is the house, Lord, I'm afraid!
A man does suffer for a maid.*

. . . How will I start?—the graining's
new

On the door—O pluck up, do.

Don't stand shivering there like that

. . . The knocker's funny—*rat-tat-tat*.

NORA CRIONA

I have looked him round and looked him
through,
Know everything that he will do
In such a case, and such a case,
And when a frown comes on his face
I dream of it, and when a smile
I trace its sources in a while.

He cannot do a thing but I
Peep and find the reason why,
Because I love him, and I seek,
Every evening in the week,
To peep behind his frowning eye
With little query, little pry,
And make him if a woman can
Happier than any man.

Yesterday he gripped her tight
And cut her throat—and serve her right!

THE RUNE

The sun and the star,
The moon and the sea,
As they wandered afar
Sent a message to me.

For our friend, lovingly
We have fashioned a moral,
When there's room to agree
There is no room to quarrel.

And, therefore, we now
Send this thought to the friend
Whom we love, showing how
Every quarrel will end.

To be far brings you near,
But too near is too far;
Can you love without fear
When the door's on the jar?

BESSIE BOBTAIL

As down the street she wambled slow,
She had not got a place to go:
She had not got a place to fall
And rest herself—no place at all.
She stumped along and wagged her pate
And said a thing was desperate.

Her face was screwed and wrinkled tight
Just like a nut—and, left and right,
On either side she wagged her head
And said a thing, and what she said
Was desperate as any word
That ever yet a person heard.

I walked behind her for a while
And watched the people nudge and smile:
But ever as she went she said,
As left and right she swung her head,
—"O God He knows," and "God He
 knows,"
And, surely God Almighty knows.

THE TINKER'S BRAT

I saw a beggar woman bare
Her bosom to the winter air;
And into the tender nest
Of her famished mother-breast
She laid her child,
And him beguiled,
With crooning song into his rest.

With crooning song and tender word,
About a little singing bird,
Who spread her wings about her brood,
And tore her bosom up for food,
And sang the while,
Them to beguile,
All in the forest's solitude.

And hearing this I could not see
That she was clad in misery;
For in her heart there was a glow
Warmed her bare feet in the snow:
In her heart was hid a sun
Would warm the world for every one.

NOTHING AT ALL

There was a man was very old :
He sat beside a little fire,
And watched the flame begin to tire.

He held his hands out to the heat,
And in his voice was half a scold,
Informed Creation he was cold.

And very, very feeble, too :
He could not lift up from his seat
To reach the fuel at his feet.

"Perhaps," said he, "God does not know
That I am nearly frozen through;
He might not like it if He knew.

"For an old man cannot stretch,
When his blood's too weak to flow,
Frozen sitting in the snow."

* * * * *

Poor old chattering, grumbling wight!
 God will hardly come to fetch
 Wood for such an ancient wretch.

But He will send you rain more cold,
 To quench that little flickering light,
 Just like this, and freeze you quite:
 . . . Men must die when they are old.

WHY TOMÁS CAM WAS GRUMPY

If I were rich what would I do?
I'd leave the horse just ready to shoe,
I'd leave the pail beside the cow,
I'd leave the furrow beneath the plough,
I'd leave the ducks tho' they should quack,
"Our eggs will be stolen before you're
back";
I'd buy a diamond brooch, a ring,
A golden chain which I would fling
Around her neck . . . Ah, what an
itch,
If I were rich!

What would I do if I were wise?
I would not debate about the skies,
Nor would I try a book to write,
Or find the wrong in the tangled right,
I would not debate with learned men
Of how, and what, and why, and when;

I'd train my tongue to a linnet's song,
I'd learn the words that couldn't go
wrong—

And then I'd say . . . And win the
prize,

If I were wise!

But I'm not that nor t'other, I bow
My back to the work that's waiting now.

I'll shoe the horse that's standing ready,

I'll milk the cow if she'll be steady,

I'll follow the plough that turns the loam,

I'll watch the ducks don't lay from home.

—And I'll curse, and curse, and curse again

Till the devil joins in with his big amen,

And none but he and I will wot

When the heart within me starts to rot,

To fester and churn its ugly brew—

. . . Where's my spade? I've work
to do.

UNDER THE BRACKEN

A body lay upon the hill
And over it the bracken swung;
The which had houséd many an ill
Of hand and heart and tongue:
It was so foul the angels who
Fit the dead for living flew
From where the corpse was flung.

Then all the ills that had been sted
In the heart and in the head,
Every sin and shame he knew
When he gloried in the sun
Rose from hell again and flew,
Filled with indignation,
And did what the angel crew
Could not bring themselves to do.

They cleanéd him more white than snow,
They purgéd him of every stain,

Fouling their own bodies so
They might not be clean again:
But when the living from the dead
Arose again the angels said,
Behold, our work was not in vain.

THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME

She watched the blaze,
And so I said the thing I'd come to say,
Pondered for days.

Her lips moved slow,
And then a widened eye she flashed upon
 me
Sudden as a blow.

She turned again,
Her hands clasping her knees and did not
 speak:
She did not deign.

And I, poor gnome!
A chided cur crawls to a hole to hide:
. . . I toddled home.

SHAME

I was ashamed, I dared not lift my eyes,
I could not bear to look upon the skies;
What I had done! sure, everybody knew!
From everywhere hands pointed where I
 stood,
And scornful eyes were piercing through
 and through
The moody armour of my hardihood.

I heard their voices too, each word an asp
That buzz'd and stung me sudden as a
 flame:
And all the world was jolting on my name,
And now and then there came a wicked
 rasp
Of laughter, jarring me to deeper shame.

And then I looked, but there was no one
 nigh,
No eyes that stabbed like swords or glinted
 sly,

No laughter creaking on the silent air:
And then I found that I was all alone
Facing my soul, and next I was aware
That this mad mockery was all my own.

SAID THE YOUNG-YOUNG MAN TO THE OLD-OLD MAN

I

I wish I had not grown to man's estate,
I wish I was a silly urchin still,
With bounding pulses and a heart elate
To meet whatever came of good or ill.

Of good or ill! not knowing what was
good,
But groping to a better than I knew,
And guessing deeper than I understood,
And hoping truths that never could be true.

Of good or ill! when, so it often seems,
There is no good at all but only ill.
Alas, the sunny summer-time of dreams,
The dragons I had nerved my hand to kill,
The maidens I should rescue, and the queen
Whose champion long ago I would have
been.

II

I wish I had a hand as big as God's
To smash creation into smithereens,
Till nothing but a heap of stones or clods
Remained of its ironic might-have-beens.

The weary ages that have drifted by,
The ages that have still to shirk and slink,
Have fashioned us the image of an eye,
And brains that weary when they try to
think.

For all is as it was, and all will be
Experimental still in ages hence:
Poor eyes that ache because they cannot
see!
Poor minds that strive without a recompense!
And after all the climbing climb we still
To find o'er every height a steeper hill.

III

I wished I was a saint not long ago,
But now I do not wish it any more:
Who'd be the ebb if he might be the flow
That bursts in thunder on the solid shore.

I'd be a wave impetuous as life
And not the skulking backwash that is
death.

I would not lose a pang of heated strife
For all the comfort that the Preacher saith.

Straight beds of that oblivion! sodden
sleep,

That dreams renunciations deeper still!
Renouncing only what they cannot keep
For trembling fingers and for flaccid will.

And yet the dreams of long ago had got
A colour my awakening forgot.

IV

I love rich venison and mellow wine:
To sprawl upon a meadow in the sun:
To swing a cane, and kiss a girl, and dine,
To break and mend and fashion things
for fun.

I love to look at women as they pass:
I love to watch a valiant horse go by:
To hear a lark sing from the seedy grass:
To praise a friend and mock an enemy.

The glory of the sunlight and the day,
The loveliness when evening closes slow,
The clouds that droop away and far away
Just faintly tinged by day's last afterglow.

And yet I fear lest misery and grief
Like misers hide a joy beyond belief.

V

Perhaps you hearken to a wiser muse!
 The undersong of life rolling along
 So deep, so scarcely audible, we lose
 The tremble of that densely weighted song:

We who are toned to lighter melodies,
 The bee that murmurs in the scented grass,
 The sharper sweetness from the nested
 trees,
 The winds that laugh and weep before they
 pass.

We well may miss that solemn monotone.
 But ye can miss the nightingale in June!
 For music that is cousin to a groan,
 For agonies that writhe upon a tune!

Drear happiness! the linnet in the tree
 Astounds your rhythms like a mockery.

VI

I wish that I were dead: I wish indeed
That I were dead and buried in the ground,
Deep down below the deepest rooted weed
And nothing left, not even one small mound

To show where I was lying. If I lay
Long-stretched and silent in that blank re-
treat,

I would not hear a sound of grave or gay,
Or even those shy, softly-stepping feet
That come and stand a while and go away.

I would be so alone, so quite alone,
And heedless as the dead can only be,
Not minding what was hidden or was
known,
Or all the gropings of philosophy.

If I were dead—but still I could not die
While there were winds and clouds upon
the sky.

VII

*Said the Old-Old Man to the Young-Young
Man*

Listen well to what I say,
These are the names of demons grey.
Smiling-Lip whose teeth are strong.
Friendly-Hand, whose claws are long.
Passionate-Eye, whose glare is fire.
Kiss-of-Joy, who lives in mire.
These are the names of demon foes
Who taught the Devil all he knows.

The lips of desire smile to hide
The teeth of fierce oppression inside.
The hand that gives and gives away
Only waits a time to slay.
The eyes that woo with a fiery stare
Are the eyes that roam anywhere.
The kiss that is quick, and mad, and sweet
Rolls the gutters along the street.

Beware of lips when smiling bland,
Beware the gifts in a friendly hand,
Beware the passionate eyes that woo,
The sweetest kiss is the kiss to rue:
A laugh is a lie and the truth a blow,
—But you won't heed me whether or no.

SECRETS

When I was young I used to think,
That every eye peered through a chink,
And every man was hid behind
His own thick self where none could find.

That every woman in the street,
Looking fair and smiling sweet,
Was maybe hiding thoughts that were
Not quite so sweet, nor quite so fair
As her kind smile and blossom face;
She hived in some forgotten place
Within herself and could not bear
That any man should see her there.

And though I'm older still I see
In every face a mystery.

CROOKED-HEART

I loosed an arrow from my bow
Down into the world below;
Thinking "This will surely dart,
Guided by my guiding fate,
Into the malignant heart
Of the person whom I hate."

So by hatred feathered well
Swift the flashing arrow fell:
And I watched it from above
Disappear
Cleaving sheer
Through the only heart I love.

Such the guard my angels keep!
But my foe is guarded well:
I have slain my love and weep
Tears of blood, while he, asleep,
Does not know an arrow fell!

MAC DHOUL

I saw them all,
I could have laughed out loud
To see them at their capers;
That serious, solemn-footed, weighty crowd
Of angels, or say resurrected drapers:
Each with a thin flame swinging round his
 head,
With lilting wings and eyes of holy dread,
And curving ears strained for the great
 foot-fall,
And not a thought of sin— . . .
I don't know how I kept the laughter in.

For I was there,
Unknown, unguessed at, snug,
In a rose tree's branchy spurt,
With two weeks' whisker blackening lug
 to lug,
With tattered breeks and only half a
 shirt.

Swollen fit to burst with laughter at the
sight
Of those dull angels drooping left and
right
Along the towering throne, each in a scare
To hear His foot advance
Huge from the cloud behind, all in a trance.

And suddenly,
As silent as a ghost,
I jumped out from the bush,
Went scooting through the glaring, nerve-
less host
All petrified, all gaping in a hush:
Came to the throne and, nimble as a rat,
Hopped up it, squatted close, and there I
sat,
Squirming with laughter till I had to cry,
To see Him standing there

Frozen with all His angels in a stare!
He raised His hand,
His hand! 'twas like a sky!
Gripped me in half a finger,

Flipped me round and sent me spinning
high
Through the hot planets: faith, I didn't
linger
To scratch myself, and then adown I sped
Scraping old moons and twisting heels and
head
A chuckle in the void till . . . here I
stand
As naked as a brick,
I'll sing the Peeler and the Goat in half
a tick.

THE MERRY POLICEMAN

I was appointed guardian by
The Power that frowns along the sky,
To watch the tree and see that none
Plucked of the fruit that grew thereon.

There was a robber in the tree,
Who climbed as high as ever he
Was able, at the top he knew
The apple of all apples grew.

The night was dark, the branch was thin,
In every wind he heard the din
Of angels calling—"Guardian, see
That no one climbs upon the tree."

And when he saw me standing there
He shook with terror and despair,
But I said to him—"Be at rest,
The best to him who wants the best."

So I was sacked, but I have got
A job in hell to keep me hot.

TREASON

He ran unto us in the little field,
Out from the bordering trees sprang grim-
acing:

He swung his hand
To the darkened land,
And when he tried to speak to us he
squealed;

His voice curled from him like a fright-
ened thing

That had no sense, he fell down on the
ground

Laughing and weeping, then, uncouthly
grim,

He told a tale to us who stood around;
And when his tale was told we fled from
him.

“O we are lost,” said he, “there is no hope,
I say there is not any hope at all;
We are betrayed,

The prayers we prayed,
Our very tears, our love, our hands that
 grope
Tremblingly skyward, and our knees that
 fall
Down to adore them, all our hopes and
 fears,
Our tremblings and our raptures are a joke,
Poor follies for the laughter and the sneers
Of those black demons and the shining folk.

“I saw the radiant gods, a multitude
Who flew down quickly to a place I know;
A meadow fair,
I will not tell you where:
And from behind the moon a blacker brood
Drove steeply down to where the gods
 below,
(A white assembly; circling vast around,)
Stood rank on rank in orderly array,
And in the centre on a higher ground
Was one more beautiful than tongue can
 say.

"I cried—alas, the good ones do not see
These demons come to take them in a
snare—

My cudgel I
Heaved shoulder-high
And ran to aid them, ran so furiously
My heart nigh broke, in running to get
there,
Nigh broke I say in pity as I ran:
My heart! ah, gods, what laughter ye had
made
Of this poor foolish loving-blinded man
If he had died in running to your aid.

"But I was late, ere I could reach the place
The demons had descended to the ground:
Each pointed wing
A moment fluttering,
And then the demons ran to an embrace
With those white-shining ones, and made a
sound
Of joy and brotherhood, and gripped each
hand,
And laughed for merriment and danced for
glee,

And shouted salutation band to band,
And held and kissed each other lovingly.

"After a little time I stole away,
I scarce could steal away for crazy pain:
I heard them plan
Of time and space and man,
And what to do each in a different way
And far apart, and when they'd meet
again.

Alas, we are betrayed! the devils are
Blood-brothers of the gods, where shall we
see

But in each other now a guiding star?
Ah comrades, do ye also fly from me?"

THE FAIRY BOY

A little Fairy in a tree
Wrinkled his wee face at me:
And he sang a song of joy
All about a little boy,
Who upon a winter night,
On a midnight long ago,
Had been wrapt away from sight
Of the world and all its woe:
Wrapt away,
Snapt away
To a place where children play
In the sunlight every day.

Where the winter is forbidden,
Where no child may older grow,
Where a flower is never hidden
Underneath a pall of snow;
Dancing gaily
Free from sorrow,
Under dancing summer skies,

Where no grim mysterious morrow
Ever comes to terrorize.

This I told a priest and he
Spoke a word of mystery,
And with candle, book and bell,
Tolling Latin like a knell,
Ruthless he
From the tree,
Sprinkling holy water round,
Drove the Fairy down to hell,
There in torment to be bound.

So the tree is withered and
There is sorrow on the land:
But the devils milder grow
Dancing gay
Every day
In that kinder land below:
There the devils dance for joy
And love that little wrinkled boy.

WHAT THE DEVIL SAID

It was the night time, God the Father Good,
Weary of praises, on a sudden stood
Up from His throne and leaned upon the
sky,
For He had heard a sound, a little cry,
Thin as a whisper climbing up the steep.

And so he looked to where the Earth asleep
Rocked with the moon, He saw the whirl-
ing sea
Swing round the world in surgent energy,
Tangling the moonlight in its netted foam,
And nearer saw the white and fretted dome
Of the ice-capped pole spin back a larded
ray
To whistling stars, bright as a wizard's
day.

But these He passed with eyes intently
wide,

Till closer still the mountains He espied
Squatting tremendous on the broad-backed
Earth;

Each nursing twenty rivers at a birth.
And then minutely sought He for the cry
Had climbed the slant of space so hugely
high.

He found it in a ditch outside a town,
A tattered, hungry woman crouching down
By a dead Babe—so there was nought to
do,

For what is done is done, and back He
drew

Sad to His Heaven of ivory and gold;
And as He sat, all suddenly there rolled
From where the woman wept upon the sod
Satan's deep voice, "*O thou unhappy
God!*"

TO THE TREE

Ballad! I have a message you must bear
Unto a certain tree: I may not tell
Where she abides, only, she is more fair
Than any tree that grows down in the dell,
Or on the mountain top, or by the well,
Or as a lovely sentinel beside
The roaming stream. No words can speak
her well,
Nor lyric sing enough her arms so wide,
Her grace, her peace, her innocence, her
happy pride.

Come quickly, Ballad, back to me again,
After you have delivered to the tree
My humble service, and if she will deign
To trust you with a message back, then
see
Most strictly you forget no word that she
Shall speak to you, no lightest yes or no:
And what she looked like when she spoke
of me,

And if she begged you stay or bade you go,
Or hesitated ere she said—what you shall
know.

Say—I will come before the day is done,
When the cool evening trembles to the dark
And one ray only of the dying sun
Rests on her topmost branches, when the
lark

Dips steeply to the grasses in the park
And only now and then sends from below
Her sleepy song: then, swift as to the mark
An arrow flies, so swiftly I will go
Nor stay until her branches wide I halt
below.

There is a crow, a fowl of evil fame,
Whom one day by the grace of God I'll
slay,

Because he has adventured to my dame
And in her bosom hides himself away:
A wicked, curious crow, all hoary-grey;
He listens to her heart that throbs so fleet
Along the trunk and by the slender way
Of her young veins whereat the branches
meet:

A curious, bad, old, wicked crow and indiscreet.

Most Beautiful! of every tree the queen!
About her feet the grasses wave for glee,
About her feet the forest folk are seen;
The timid nymph bends down a ready
knee,
And mighty Pan himself, unwillingly,
Yet all perforce, must stoop before her
grace,
And round about in a wild ecstasy
The light-foot satyrs (stayed from an embrace)
Stare shamefully and dance and mince with
antic pace.

Fortress of melody! well hidden heart!
Deep bosomed lady whom I love so well!
Dear solitude of singers without art!
Sweet shadiness wherein I long to dwell,
Enrapt and comforted from any spell
Of thought or care or woefulness or sin;
Or trouble which a man may not foretell;

Or slothful ease which it is death to win;
Or fear which cometh at the last and creep-
eth in.

If you among her little leaves will fly
And what they whisper bring to me again,
Dear Ballad, I will write your history
Upon a sheepskin with a golden pen;
It shall be read by women and by men:
Each youth will sing it to his paramour
As they go roving in the evening when
All joy is innocence and love is lore,
And you and youth and love will live for
evermore.

Rapture and joy and ecstasy and pain!
The windy trumpets of the void shall soar
Over the sky. The Morning Stars again
Will sing together joyous as of yore:
The sea shall tramp with banners on the
shore:
The little hills skip merrily along

The forest leave its field and with a roar

Stride down the pathway shouting out a
song,
And everything be happy as the day is
long.

Envoi

Ballad, farewell! go tell her how I burn,
Say I am dead until her face I see:
And I will wait and sigh till you return,
And plague the god of love and life to
favour me.

·ORA PRO NOBIS

A bird is singing now;
Merrily
Sings he
Of his mate on the bough,
And her eggs in the tree;
But yonder a hawk
Swoops down from the blue
And the bird's song is finished
—Is this story true?
·God now have mercy on me and on you.

AFTERWARDS

Maidenhood, maidenhood, whither art thou gone away from me? Never again will I come to thee, never again.—Sappho.

Am I a bride?

I scarce can think it, I

Who yesterday was quick to blush and hide
Behind my mother's skirts, and often
cried—

(Foolish to be so shy)

When strangers came and mother was not
nigh.

Strange, I am wed!

Wife to be held and kissed!

And no one chides his head beside my head,
Nor cries, "Thou bad thing, fie!" but all
instead

Smile blessingly. I wist

It is a wonder tale . . . yet something
dear is missed.

No longer free.

Love's captive I am ta'en.

. . . Now whither art thou gone away
from me

Dear maidenhood? "O I am so far from
thee.

And howso thou complain,

I never more may come to thee again."

THE END OF THE ROAD

To Æ

This is a thing is true,
Everything comes to an end:
The loving of me and you,
The walking of friend and friend.

Shall I weep the beauty I knew,
Or the greatness gathered away
Or the truth that is only true,
As the things that a man will say?

The child and the mother will die,
The wife and the husband sever,
The sun will go out of the sky,
And the rain will be falling for ever.

For ever until the waves rear
To the skies with a terrible tune,
And cover the earth and air,
And climb up the beach of the moon.

Then go, for all things must end,
And this is true as I say—
A friend will be leaving a friend,
And a man will be going away.

WIND AND TREE

To Æ

"A woman is a branchy tree
And man a singing wind,
And from her branches carelessly
He takes what he can find:
Then man and wind go far away
While winter comes with loneliness,
With cold and rain and slow decay
On woman and on tree till they
Droop down unto the ground and be
A withered woman, a withered tree;
While wind and man woo undismayed
Another tree, another maid."

EVE

Long ago in ages grey,
I was fashioned out of clay:
Builded with the sun and moon,
Kneaded to a holy tune;
And there came to me a breath
From the House of Life and Death.

Then the sun roared into fire,
And the moon with swift desire
Leaped among the starry throng
Singing on her journey long;
And I climbed up from the sod,
Holding to the hand of God.

In a garden fair and wide
Looking down a mountain side,
Prone I lay and felt the press
Of Immensity's caress,
There a space I lived and knew
What the Power meant to do.

Till upon a day there came
Down to me a voice of flame,
"Thou the corner-stone of man,
Rise and set about my plan,
Nothing doubting, for a guide
I have quickened in thy side."

From the garden wide and fair,
From the pure and holy air,
Down the mountain side I crept
Stumbling often, ill-adept;
Feeling pangs of woeful bliss
Rounding from the primal kiss.

Then from out my straining side
Came the son who is my guide:
Him I nursed through faithful days
Till I faltered at his gaze,
Staring boldly when he saw
I was woman, life, and law.

Life and law and dear delight:
I the moon upon the night
All alluring: I the tree

Growing nuts of mystery :
I the tincture and the dew
That the apple reddens through.

I desirable and sweet :
I of fruitfulness complete :
I the promise and the threat
Which the gods may not forget :
I the Weaver spinning blind
Destinies for humankind.

Lifting, lifting ever up
Till I reach the golden cup :
Groping down and ever down
Till I find the buried crown :
I the Searcher sent to bring
Plumes for the Almighty's Wing.

Weaving Life and Death I go :
Building what I do not know :
Planting tho' in sore distress,
Gardens in the wilderness :
Palaces too big to scan
By the little eye of man.

Knowing surely this is true,
That the thing I have to do,
Has been ordered by the breath
From the House of Life and Death:
It no wind of chance or wide
Cloud of doubt may set aside.

Still the sun roars out in fire,
And the moon with pale desire
Keeps the path appointed her
In the starry theatre:
Sun and moon and I are true,
To the work we have to do.

THE BREATH OF LIFE

(To Elizabeth Bloxham)

And while they talked and talked, and
while they sat

Changing their base minds into baser coin;
And telling—they! how truth and beauty
join,

And how a certain this was good, but that
Was baser than the viper or the toad,
Or the blind beggar glaring down the road.

I turned from them in fury, and I ran
To where the moon shone out upon the
height,

Down the long reaches of a summer night,
Stretching slim fingers, and the starry clan
Grew thicker than the flowers that we see
Clustered in quiet fields of greenery.

Around me was the night-time sane and
cold,

The clouds that knew no care and no re-
straint

Swung through the silences, or drifted faint
To pale horizons, wreathing fold on fold,
The moon's sharp edge, each rolling cloud
a sea,

A foam of silver shining gloriously.

The quietudes that sunder star from star,
The hazy distances of loneliness,
Where never eagle's wing or timid press
Of lark or wren could venture, and the far
Profundities untravelled and unstirred
By any act of man or thought or word.

These held me with amazement and de-
light:

I yearned up through the spaces of the
sky,

Beyond the rolling clouds, beyond the high
And delicate white moon, and up the
height,

And past the rocking stars, and out to
where

The ether failed in spaces sharp and bare.

The breath that is the very breath of life
Throbb'd close to me: I heard the pulses
beat,

That lift the universes into heat:
The slow withdrawal, and the deeper strife
Of His wide respiration, like a sea
It ebb'd and flood'd through immensity.

His breath alone in wave on mighty wave!
O moon and stars swell to a raptur'd song!
Ye mountains toss the harmony along!
O little men with little souls to save
Swing up glad chantings, ring the skies
above,
With boundless gratitude for boundless
love!

Probing the ocean to its steepest drop;
Rejoicing in the viper and the toad,
And the blind beggar glaring down the
road;
And they who talk and talk and never stop
Equally quickening; with a care to bend
The gnat's slant wing into a swifter end.

Searching the quarries of all life, the deep
Low crannies and shy places of the world,
To warm the smallest insect that is curled
In a deep root, or on the sun to heap
Fiercer combustion, spending love on all
In equal share, the mighty and the small.

* * * *

The silence clung about me like a gift,
The tender night-time folded me around
Protectingly, and in a peace profound
The clouds drooped slowly backward drift
on drift
Into the darkness, and the moon was gone,
And soon the stars had vanished every one.

But on the sky, a handsbreadth in the west,
A faint cold brightness crept and soared
and spread,
Until the rustling heavens overhead,
And the grey trees and grass were manifest:
Then through the chill a golden spear was
hurled,
And the big sun tossed laughter on the
world.

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

I thought I heard Him calling. Did you
hear

A sound, a little sound? My curious ear
Is dinned with flying noises, and the tree
Goes—whisper, whisper, whisper silently
Till all its whispers spread into the sound
Of a dull roar. Lie closer to the ground,
The shade is deep and He may pass us by,
We are so very small, and His great eye,
Customed to starry majesties, may gaze
Too wide to spy us hiding in the maze:
Ah, misery! the sun has not yet gone
And we are naked: He will look upon
Our crouching shame, may make us stand
upright

Burning in terror—O that it were night!
He may not come . . . what? listen,
listen, now—

He is here! lie closer . . . *Adam,*
where art thou?

NEW PINIONS

I tore the shackles from my feet,
The bandage from my straining eye,
I spread my wings above the street
And soared upon the sky.
I knew the stars for friends, and knew
The sun and moon more happy grew
To see me flying by.

And they, far down below, who moved
With hobbled ankles, groping mad
Among the gutters disapproved
And said that it was sad
A man should want to leave the sty,
To spread his wings abroad and fly
When garbage might be had.

But I in converse with the sun,
Or visiting the moon on high,
Or joining with a star to run
Mad races on the sky,

Can hardly find the time to spare
A thought for the dull gropers there
Who never lift an eye.

PSYCHOMETRIST

I listened to a man and he
Had no word to say to me:
Then unto a stone I bowed,
And it spoke to me aloud.

"The Force that bindeth me so long,
Once moved in the linnet's song,
Now upon the ground I lie,
While the centuries go by.

"Linnets must for joy atone
And be fastened into stone,
While upon the waving tree
Stones shall sing in Energy."

THE WINGED TRAMP

I saw a poor man walking slow,
Scarcely knowing where to go;
And from door to door he said,
Unto those who stood within,
—"Give me, with a little bread,
Absolution for my sin."

And the people always said,
—"Friend, come in and eat our bread;
Lay you down and rest a while,
Sleep a little time and pray
Unto God and He will smile
All your weighty sin away."

Then the poor man rose and flew
Up to God and no one knew
He was God's beloved Son:
And He told His Father plain
What the folk had said and done:
—So God spared the world again.

POLES

Cleric and Convict are moulded on,
The same old grinning skeleton,
And a saint might think if he looked within
That the Devil had gotten beneath his
skin.

CHOPIN'S FUNERAL MARCH

Yea, ye shall rest, O be sure that your sleep
will endure:

Through the daylight, the dusk, and the
dark, while the moon and the sun
Rise successive and fail and die down when
the journey is done:

Ye shall rest, taking heed of no thing that
shall come or shall go:

Ye shall sleep through the thunder nor
heed when the hurricanes blow:

When the strong trees are felled and the
rocks topple down from the height:

While the mountains dissolve into sand and
the valleys upright

Climb stark into mountains again, ye shall
hear not a sound,

Secure in the sleep that I give in the heart
of the ground:

CHOPIN'S FUNERAL MARCH 115

Till the earth like a mote through the
spaces falls into the sun,
And the work of all things that have been
is a work that is done.

THE MONKEY'S COUSIN

I shall reach up, I shall grow
Till the high gods say—"Hello,
Little brother, you must stop
Ere our shoulders you o'ertop."

I shall grow up, I shall reach
Till the little gods beseech
—"Master, wait a little, do,
We are running after you!"

I shall bulk and swell and scale
Till the little gods shall quail,
Running here and there to hide
From the terror of my stride.

THE LONELY GOD

(To Stephen MacKenna)

So Eden was deserted, and at eve
Into the quiet place God came to grieve.
His face was sad, His hands hung slackly
down

Along His robe, too sorrowful to frown
He paced along the grassy paths and
through

The silent trees, and where the flowers
grew

Tended by Adam. All the birds had gone
Out to the world, and singing was not one
To cheer the lonely God out of His grief—
The silence broken only when a leaf
Tapt lightly on a leaf, or when the wind,
Slow-handed, swayed the bushes to its mind.

And so along the base of a round hill,
Rolling in fern, He bent His way until

He neared the little hut which Adam made,
And saw its dusky roof-tree overlaid
With greenest leaves. Here Adam and his
spouse

Were wont to nestle in their little house
Snug at the dew-time: here He, standing
sad,

Sighed with the wind, nor any pleasure had
In heavenly knowledge, for His darlings
twain,

Had gone from Him to learn the feel of
pain,

And what was meant by sorrow and de-
spair,

—Drear knowledge for a Father to pre-
pare.

There He looked sadly on the little place,
A beehive round it was, without a trace
Of occupant or owner: standing dim
Among the gloomy trees it seemed to Him
A final desolation, the last word
Wherewith the lips of silence had been
stirred.

Chaste and remote, so tiny and so shy,
So new withal, so lost to any eye,
So pac't of memories all innocent
Of days and nights that in it had been
 spent

In blithe communion, Adam, Eve, and He,
Afar from Heaven and its gaudery
And now no more! He still must be the
 God

But not the friend; a Father with a rod
Whose voice was fear, whose countenance
 a threat,

Whose coming terror, and whose going wet
With penitential tears; not evermore
Would they run forth to meet Him as
 before

With careless laughter, striving each to be
First to His hand and dancing in their
 glee

To see Him coming—they would hide in-
 stead

At His approach, or stand and hang the
 head,

Speaking in whispers, and would learn to
pray
Instead of asking, "Father, if we may."

Never again to Eden would He haste
At cool of evening, when the sun had paced
Back from the tree-tops, slanting from the
rim
Of a low cloud, what time the twilight dim,
Knit tree to tree in shadow, gathering slow
Till all had met and vanished in the flow
Of dusky silence, and a brooding star
Stared at the growing darkness from afar,
While haply now and then some nested bird
Would lift upon the air a sleepy word
Most musical, or swing its airy bed
To the high moon that drifted overhead.

'Twas good to quit at evening His great
throne,
To lay His crown aside, and all alone
Down through the quiet air to stoop and
glide
Unkenned by angels: silently to hide

In the green fields, by dappled shades,
where brooks,
Through leafy solitudes and quiet nooks
Flowed far from heavenly majesty and
pride,
From light astounding and the wheeling
tide
Of roaring stars. Thus does it ever seem
Good to the best to stay aside and dream
In narrow places, where the hand can feel
Something beside, and know that it is real.

His angels! silly creatures who could sing
And sing again, and delicately fling
The smoky censer, bow and stand aside
All mute in adoration: thronging wide,
Till nowhere could He look but soon He
saw

An angel bending humbly to the law
Mechanic; knowing nothing more of pain,
Than when they were forbid to sing again,
Or swing anew the censer, or bow down,
In humble adoration of His frown.
This was the thought in Eden as He trod
. . . It is a lonely thing to be a God.

So long! afar through Time He bent His
mind,
For the beginning, which He could not
find,
Through endless centuries and backwards
still
Endless for ever, till His 'stonied will
Halted in circles, dizzied in the swing
Of mazy nothingness—His mind could
bring
Not to subjection, grip or hold the theme
Whose wide horizon melted like a dream
To thinnest edges. Infinite behind
The piling centuries were trodden blind
In gulfs chaotic—so He could not see
When He was not who always had To Be.

Not even godly fortitude can stare
Into Eternity, nor easy bear
The insolent vacuity of Time:
It is too much, the mind can never climb
Up to its meaning, for, without an end,
Without beginning, plan, or scope, or trend
To point a path, there nothing is to hold

And steady surmise: so the mind is rolled
And swayed and drowned in dull Immen-
sity.

Eternity outfaces even Me
With its indifference, and the fruitless year,
Would swing as fruitless were I never here.

And so for ever, day and night the same,
Years flying swiftly nowhere, like a game
Played random by a madman, without end
Or any reasoned object but to spend
What is unspendable—Eternal Woe!
O Weariness of Time that fast or slow
Goes never further, never has in view
An ending to the thing it seeks to do,
And so does nothing: merely ebb and flow,
From nowhere into nowhere, touching so
The shores of many stars and passing on,
Careless of what may come or what has
gone.

O solitude unspeakable! to be
For ever with oneself! never to see
An equal face, or feel an equal hand,

To sit in state and issue reprimand,
Admonishment or glory, and to smile
Disdaining what has happened the while!
O to be breast to breast against a foe!
Against a friend! to strive and not to know
The laboured outcome: Love nor be aware
How much the other loved, and greatly
care

With passion for that happy love or hate,
Nor know what joy or dole was hid in fate.

For I have ranged the spacy width and gone
Swift north and south, striving to look
upon

An ending somewhere. Many days I sped
Hard to the west, a thousand years I fled
Eastwards in fury, but I could not find
The fringes of the Infinite. Behind
And yet behind, and ever at the end
Came new beginnings, paths that did not
wend

To anywhere were there: and ever vast
And vaster spaces opened—till at last
Dizzied with distance, thrilling to a pain
Unnameable, I turned to Heaven again.

And there My angels were prepared to fling
The cloudy incense, there prepared to sing
My praise and glory—O, in fury I

Then roared them senseless, then threw
down the sky

And stamped upon it, buffeted a star
With My great fist, and flung the sun afar :
Shouted My anger till the mighty sound
Rung to the width, frightening the furthest
bound

And scope of hearing: tumult vaster still,
Thronging the echo, dinning my ears, until
I fled in silence, seeking out a place
To hide Me from the very thought of
Space.

And so, He thought, in Mine own Image I
Have made a man, remote from Heaven
high

And all its humble angels: I have poured
My essence in his nostrils: I have cored
His heart with My own spirit; part of Me
His mind with laboured growth unceasingly
Must strive to equal Mine; must ever grow

By virtue of My essence till he know
Both good and evil through the solemn test
Of sin and retribution, till, with zest,
He feels his godhead, soars to challenge
Me
In Mine own Heaven for supremacy.

Through savage beasts and still more savage
clay
Invincible, I bid him fight a way
To greater battles, crawling through defeat
Into defeat again: ordained to meet
Disaster in disaster: prone to fall
I prick him with My memory to call
Defiance at his victor and arise
With anguished fury to his greater size
Through tribulation, terror and despair
Astounded, he must fight to higher air,
Climb battle into battle till he be
Confronted with a flaming sword and Me.

So growing age by age to greater strength,
To greater beauty, skill and deep intent:
With wisdom wrung from pain, with energy

Nourished in sin and sorrow he will be
Strong, pure and proud an enemy to meet,
Tremendous on a battle-field, or sweet
To walk by as a friend with candid mind.
—Dear enemy or friend so hard to find,
I yet shall find you, yet shall put My breast
In enmity or love against your breast:
Shall smite or clasp with equal ecstasy
The enemy or friend who grows to Me.

The topmost blossom of his growing I
Shall take unto Me, cherish and lift high
Beside Myself upon My holy throne:
—It is not good for God to be alone.
The perfect woman of his perfect race
Shall sit beside Me in the highest place
And be My Goddess, Queen, Companion,
Wife,
The rounder of My majesty, the life,
Of My ambition. She will smile to see
Me bending down to worship at her knee
Who never bent before, and she will say,
—“Dear God, who was it taught *Thee* how
to pray?”

And through eternity, adown the slope
Of never-ending time, compact of hope,
Of zest and young enjoyment, I and She
Will walk together, sowing jollity
Among the raving stars, and laughter
through

The vacancies of Heaven, till the blue
Vast amplitudes of space lift up a song,
The echo of our presence, rolled along
And ever rolling where the planets sing
The majesty and glory of the King.
Then conquered, thou, eternity, shall lie
Under my hand as little as a fly.

I am the Master: I the mighty God
And you My workshop. Your pavilions
trod

By Me and Mine shall never cease to be,
For you are but the magnitude of Me,
The width of My extension, the surround
Of My dense splendour. Rolling, rolling
round,

To steeped infinity and out beyond
My own strong comprehension you are
bond

And servile to My doings. Let you swing
More wide and ever wide you do but fling
Around this instant Me, and measure still
The breadth and the proportion of My
Will.

Then stooping to the hut—a beehive
round—

God entered in and saw upon the ground
The dusty garland, Adam, (learned to
weave)

Had loving placed upon the head of Eve
Before the terror came, when joyous they
Could look for God at closing of the day
Profound and happy. So the Mighty
Guest

Bent, took, and placed the blossoms in His
breast.

“This,” said He gently, “I shall show My
queen

When she hath grown to Me in space
serene,

And say “’twas worn by Eve.” So, smiling
fair,

He spread abroad His wings upon the air.

HAIL AND FAREWELL

*The poem is sung,
The picture quite
Finished and hung
In the candid light;
But poet and painter must go away
Ere they hear what the critical people say.*

*Age after age,
Without a break,
A prophet shall rage
By a lonely lake:
And know not ere he has gone away
Who is to listen to what he'll say.*

*But the poet shall hear,
The painter see
The praises dear
Of their mystery:
And poet and painter and prophet find
The glory they thought they had left be-
hind.*

*There is an ear
To hear the song,
An eye to peer
At the picture long:
A brain to gather the tale and bless
The prophet who spoke to the wilderness.*





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Stephens, James
The hill of vision

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